



Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Rehabilitate Reservation 72

PEPC Project Number: 39667

Project Description:

The National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the DowntownDC Business Improvement District (Downtown BID) proposes to rehabilitate US Reservation 72, which is managed by NPS. This triangular park is located between 6th Street NW, I Street NW and Massachusetts Avenue NW. Reservation 72 is within the administrative jurisdiction of National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), a unit of the NPS. The purpose of the project is to improve existing conditions and preserve the character of the L'Enfant era reservation.

The Downtown BID has coordinated with NPS staff regarding preservation of the character-defining features of the park. NPS has discussed the project with the District State Historic Preservation Officer, as well as staff from the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, and will shortly initiate formal consultation with these agencies.

The project includes: (1) replacement of the existing sidewalk with a dark gray concrete walk that is sympathetic to the existing historic material; (2) a slight realignment of the sidewalk to better accommodate visitor use patterns; (3) minor adjustments to the existing fence and quarter-round curbs to align with the new sidewalk layout; (4) lawn rehabilitation via re-grading of the site and new sod; (5) placement of additional water lines and quick coupler heads; (6) installation of ten refurbished or new benches, and replacement of trash receptacles. The work is expected to take place during spring of 2012.

On November 21, 2011, NAMA initiated a public comment period in order to solicit input from the community with regard to the proposal. During the 30-day comment period, NAMA received 35 letters. The majority of the comments are in support of improvements to the park. Additional requests or suggestions include a children's' playground or other type of play spot, a dog park, a fence along the Massachusetts side of the park, and recycling bins. These and other comments are summarized in the table below. NPS finds that the proposed project, with the addition of post-and-chain fencing along Massachusetts Avenue to protect rehabilitated turf areas, would not have significant environmental impacts, would not be controversial and therefore warrants this Categorical Exclusion.

Public comments (grouped as appropriate)	NAMA Response
(1) The park is currently unattractive, and therefore not often used by local residents or professionals on their lunch break; the proposed enhancements are needed and	NAMA is pleased to be working with a partner to improve this historic park and benefit park visitors.

will improve the park	
<p>(2) This park should include a children's play area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a piece of sculptural art, in keeping with Chinatown theme, that children may play on and climb; • If typical playground equipment may not be appropriate for this space, consider an alternative that children may play on safely (sandbox, etc.) • The surrounding area is sorely lacking a playground for children 	<p>The nearest public playground appears to be a mile away, at the Kennedy Recreation Center at 1401 7th Street NW. While NAMA acknowledges residents' concern regarding this matter, it is not able to provide a formal play area in the federal park. This park is one of 26 small landscaped parks along Massachusetts Avenue, a contributing feature of the L'Enfant Plan of the City. These parks are intended as passive, rather than active, recreational areas. The park benefits local residents and visitors by providing green space and a place to sit.</p> <p>See http://www.ncpc.gov/capitalspace/ for more information on how NPS, the District, and the National Capital Planning Commission strategize regarding parks and open space in DC neighborhoods.</p>
(3) Add recycling bins	<p>NAMA strongly supports recycling at its parks, but currently does not have the ability to service recycling bins outside of the National Mall and East and West Potomac Parks. Until this recycling program is able to be expanded, we encourage park visitors to respect the environment and the park by carrying out their recyclable items, and disposing them in residential or other District recycling bins.</p>
<p>(4) Reconsider proposed fencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add fencing along the Massachusetts Avenue side so that children do not dart out into traffic, to give the park a more protected feeling, and to prevent pedestrians from creating social trails through the park. • If the existing iron fences are removed, people could enter directly to the grass from the sidewalks on I and 6th Streets 	<p>This was discussed early during the project planning. This park acts as a unit with the opposite park (U.S. Reservation 74), and these reservations are typically treated, together, as a rectangle, with fencing along the outer edges, and open space along the diagonal street. However, in order to protect the restored turf, NAMA is considering adding post-and-chain fencing along the Massachusetts side of the park.</p>
(5) Consider providing an enclosed and landscaped dog run in the smaller park (diagonal across Massachusetts Avenue)	<p>The adjacent park (U.S. Reservation 74) is also a L'Enfant Plan park and not intended to serve as a dog park. See the link above for information on the Capital Space initiative.</p>
(6) Make this a dog park, with an area set aside for a fenced dog run or enclosing the park completely so people can let their pets loose.	<p>Although leashed dogs are permitted to use this and other NPS parks throughout the city, the purpose of Reservation 72 is not to serve as a dog park (see above responses).</p>

(7) Consider a water feature if the budget allows	A water feature is not being considered for this park (see above responses).
(8) Reconsider the planting plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add trees to the Massachusetts side of the park; • more plants might be a nice improvement; • colorful flowers would liven up the park; • do not provide more trees, as this gives people too many places to hide when it's dark • don't remove any existing trees, the proposed tree alignment looks good- the more trees the better 	Trees are being added to the Massachusetts side of the park, according to the historic planting plan; other landscaping, such as hedges, are not being provided because they have the potential to attract nuisances.
(9) Reconsider the proposed benches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide fewer benches, alternative forms of seating, or no seating at all to discourage long-term use of benches; • creative seating solutions could be natural, Asian, and organic; • benches should be the type that prevents lying down • provide more benches or places to sit 	NAMA has a consistent treatment of US Reservations in DC with regard to site furniture. NAMA will use the approved park style bench (iron frame with wood slats), in order to maintain this consistency with L'Enfant Reservations throughout the city. Sleeping or lying down on benches is not illegal. Enforcement against illegal activities remains the responsibility of the NPS through the US Park Police.
(10) Provide better lighting at night, both in-ground and above (not large spotlights), to ensure the park is well-lit	NAMA believes that ambient light from perimeter sidewalks is sufficient, and consistent with other comparable reservations. New light fixtures are not a part of this project.
(11) Because grass is too long and ill kept, provide less grass combined with low maintenance ground cover, stone, and natural grasses	Ground cover and tall grasses may attract nuisances and are more expensive to maintain, while stone is both expensive and would result in a reduction in the amount of green space provided. Turf maintenance is accomplished by the NPS or its contractor at the site.
(12) Seek a creative and modern solution	See above responses.
(13) Use permeable material for sidewalk to assist with runoff	Although NAMA will soon undergo a sidewalk materials study, and in the future may consider permeability of certain hard surfaces throughout its jurisdiction, permeable materials are not yet practical for this park. However, note that sidewalk drainage is designed such that runoff flows into the turf areas, so that it is filtered and does not add to the District's stormwater drainage system.
(14) Reconsider the proposed pathways	See the above responses about fencing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paths should be placed so people don't create social paths, and needs to be practical; • pave or brick a diagonal walkway where the social trail is now • concrete paths inside the park could be eliminated in favor of grass 	<p>treatment at this reservation. Regarding the paths, they are a historic feature of the park, and formal paths are necessary to protect turf. The existing social trail leads to a dangerous mid-block crossing. Repairing the sod and installing post-and-chain fencing along Massachusetts Avenue would help to eliminate the significant social trail. The new walk alignment would better respond to user patterns.</p>
(15) Include a bus shelter on 5 th and Mass, as many people take the circulator from this location	The outer sidewalks are managed by the District.
(16) The area around the park is growing significantly with apartments and condominiums, and the park needs to reflect the current needs.	The park will continue to provide passive recreation and green space to area residents, and it will continue to be protected as such by the NPS. Developers need to consider and address the needs of new residents (e.g., by providing dog exercise and toilet areas.)
(17) Build a couple pull-in places for vendors to make it a gathering place for neighbors	The outer sidewalks and streets are the District's jurisdiction.
(18) Trim branches around the sidewalks	NAMA's goal is to keep limbs pruned to provide 7-foot clearance.

Project Locations:

Location

County: NA

State: DC

District:

Section:

Geo. Marker:

Other:

Mitigation(s):

N/A

Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

C.4 Routine maintenance and repairs to cultural resource sites, structures, utilities and grounds under an approved Historic Structures Preservation Guide or Cyclic Maintenance Guide; or if the action would not adversely affect the cultural resource.

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

for Superintendent: Steph L... Date: 4/12/12

NPS Contact: Alice McLarty 202-245-4686